

# DARKNESS to LIGHT

## CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE STATISTICS Risk Factors

### FACT:

While no child is immune, there are child and family characteristics that significantly heighten or lower risk of sexual abuse.

The following risk factors are based on reported and identified cases of abuse:

- Family structure is the most important risk factor in child sexual abuse. Children who live with two married biological parents are at a low risk for abuse. The risk increases where children live with step-parents or a single parent.<sup>3</sup>
- Children living without either parent (foster children) are 10 times more likely to be sexually abused than children that live with both biological parents. Children who live with a single parent that has a live-in partner are at the highest risk; they are 20 times more likely to be victims of child sexual abuse than children living with both biological parents.<sup>3</sup>
- Gender is also a major factor in sexual abuse. Females are five times more likely to be abused than males.<sup>30</sup> The age of the male being abused also plays a part. 8% of victims aged 12-17 are male. 26% of victims under the age of 12 are male.<sup>9</sup>
- Age is a significant factor in sexual abuse. While there is risk for children of all ages, children are most vulnerable to abuse between the ages of 7 and 13.<sup>30</sup> The median age for reported abuse is 9 years old.<sup>31</sup> However, of children who are sexually abused, more than 20% are abused before the age of 8.<sup>9</sup>
- Race and ethnicity are an important factor in identified sexual abuse. African American children have almost twice the risk of sexual abuse than white children. Children of Hispanic ethnicity have a slightly greater risk than non-Hispanic white children.<sup>3</sup>

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- The risk for sexual abuse is tripled for children whose parent(s) are not in the labor force.<sup>3</sup>
- Children in low socioeconomic status households are three times as likely to be identified as a victim of child abuse.<sup>3</sup>
- Children who live in rural areas are almost two times more likely to be identified as victims of child sexual abuse.<sup>3</sup>
- Children who witness or are the victim of other crimes are significantly more likely to be sexually abused.<sup>32</sup>

## FACT:

Family and acquaintance child sexual abuse perpetrators have reported that they look for specific characteristics in the children they choose to abuse.

Perpetrators report that they look for passive, quiet, troubled, lonely children from single parent or broken homes.<sup>17</sup>

Perpetrators frequently seek out children who are particularly trusting, find new and work proactively to establish a trusting relationship before abusing them.<sup>51</sup> Not infrequently, this extends to establishing a trusting relationship with the victim's family as well.<sup>17</sup>

## References

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